

Planning Board & Cove Commission Minutes  
December 7, 2016 – 7:00 P.M.  
Town Council Conference Room  
125 Main Street  
East Greenwich, RI

Planning Board Members Present: Steve Brusini, Chair; Michael Donegan, Vice-Chair; and Nate Ginsburg.

Planning Board Members Absent: Jason Gomez, Brad Turchetta, Chris Russo; Ben Lupovitz; and Dan Tagliatela.

Cove Commission Members Present: Ken Powell, Barbara Brusini, Stephen Mendes, Mark Shapiro, and Alex Clegg.

Cove Commission Members Absent: Bethany Warburton and Nicole Rainville.

Staff present: Lisa Bourbonnais, Planning Director; Lea Hitchen, Assistant Town Planner; Jim Cullen, Harbormaster; Aaron Lindo, Planning Assistant; Sydney Kirsch, Legal Counsel; and Tom Coyle, Town Manager.

Mr. Brusini, Chair of the Planning Board opened the joint meeting at 7:00PM and introduced the Planning Board present. Ms. Hitchen opened the Cove Commission meeting and introduced the Cove Commission members present.

**Joint Work Session with the Cove Commission & Planning Board to Discuss Land Uses Adjacent to the Cove. Includes Setting Priorities in Preparation for Starting the Waterfront Plan Process in Early 2017 and Ideas from RWU Students for Adaptive Re-Use of the Former Harris Marina Site.**

Ms. Hitchen asserted the RWU students submitted very preliminary draft ideas in a powerpoint printout which she passed out; they were unable to attend tonight's meeting due to a prior commitment. She noted Town Staff had tasked the students to design a passive recreation space with a possible kayak/canoe launch and a few parking spaces. Ms. Hitchen confirmed the former "Harris Shack" was demolished and cleared from the site during the long Thanksgiving Day weekend. At this point Ms. Hitchen commented CRMC is very amenable to the ideas planned for the 40' ROW only requesting that it be winterized which the Town DPW has already taken care of.

Mr. Brusini recalled the last time the Planning Board and Cove Commission got together which was for a tour of the Cove. He noted from the Planning Board's perspective, they would like to support the Cove Commission as much as possible, noting that although they are not policy makers they can definitely make solid recommendations as a group.

Mr. Brusini felt as though the Town is under-using the Town waterfront property (generally speaking from the northern point being Barbara Tufts playground to the southern point of the

overlook/stairs) and there are a number of ways without doing anything earth shattering to reuse parcels for the betterment of the Town – whether it be raising revenue, improving quality of life, allowing Town Staff to do their jobs more efficiently – all of these things could be accomplished with the reuse of this site.

Mr. Brusini asked what the Board members specifically wanted to see in terms of redevelopment and by the end of the meeting produce an outline of what is there now, what is jointly perceived as being desirable, and things needed to make it happen in an outline format.

Mr. Cullen summarized the idea to construct a town marina; he had provided a rough rendering of service docks with finger piers to accommodate 25', 30' and 35' boats (for a total of 75 slips plus about 10 end docks) for a total of 2,245 linear feet of dockage. He approximates a charge \$100/foot (versus \$140/ft at Norton's Marina) for a total income of \$225,000/year or \$150,000 net income. Mr. Cullen described a boardwalk being implemented as part of the dock in an attempt to not interfere with the existing sea grass or shoreline and compliment the area. In order to ensure an increased life expectancy of the dock system, Mr. Cullen suggested installing a bubbler system around the docks during the winter months. Mr. Cullen commented that numerous municipalities around the State have town-owned marinas but it was Mr. Mendes who noted locally Bristol and Newport have municipal docks but grant money is associated with them.

Mr. Brusini summarized the discussion points which included a marina - part of the marina including a public building for the harbor master, Parks & Recreation Department, DPW, etc; a kayak/boat launch (i.e. some other form of public access to the water); boardwalk (with the possibility of being contiguous); transfer station (relocation, closure, etc.) and future retail space development.

There were general concerns about staffing a marina and making this a bigger venture than it needs to be if the Town residents do not buy into the project.

There was a general consensus for the desire to have the transfer station moved off-site, possibly to the existing DPW facility compound, located on Bear Swamp Road, where the Town houses the fleet of DPW vehicles, salt, sand, etc. which would allow for a total beautification of the waterfront without having to work around it. It was acknowledged that Town resident support or the political will to move the transfer station in its entirety might not exist which should be taken into account and why more than one recommendation from this group should be submitted. Mr. Brusini suggested that possible recommendations may be to close the transfer station, move the transfer station on the existing site, move it off site, or reduce the size of the transfer station.

Mr. Donegan advised of potential environmental and permitting issues with an existing transfer station and Mr. Cullen noted the existing water depth is a potential setback so dredging will be required but the project is too preliminary to know how much at this point.

Staying on track, Mr. Brusini recommended items that are of the utmost important to the group be included in Phase 1 with a Phase 2 created for those items that may come in the future, perhaps being retail development.

Mr. Cullen reiterated the waterfront project is to enhance East Greenwich, not explicitly to create revenue. He explained the reason for proposing a large number of smaller sized boats is he would like to see some of the slips reserved for commercial fishermen who are getting pushed out of other marinas yet have a strong history on the EG waterfront. Mr. Cullen also mentioned the Sea Scouts have approached the Town and have shown interest in creating a long term lease agreement; the high school sailing team could benefit from having a better functioning program where they could easily get a boat in the water as opposed to going through the EGYC or GBSA. It was noted the EGYC has a 10-12 year waiting list for a slip which shows there is demand for slips in Greenwich Cove. Ms. Bourbonnais pointed out the desire for recreational sports goes beyond sailing as kayaking, paddleboarding, canoeing, etc. are very popular nowadays as there are two paddleboard rental companies along Greenwich Cove, one of which just lost its home base at Norton's.

Mr. Brusini again summarized the meeting noting the majority of the discussion has been focused on developing a marina with the development of a boardwalk along with a quasi-nature trail already existing behind the WWTF which could be connected together and possibly be linked from Scalloptown Park to Barbara Tufts Playground as well as appropriate screening of the WWTF.

When asked how and where the harbormaster falls within the Town Mr. Cullen confirmed his position is part of the police department, not the Parks & Recreation Department, and the harbormaster boat is essentially a patrol boat.

While imagining the types of uses that could go into a public town-owned building, the uses were endless including an event room for rent and classrooms as the Sea Scouts have shown interest in classroom space. Additionally, the Town should consider infrastructure including restroom and shower facilities as well as pump out facilities for boaters as this would most likely be conditional for any water based recreational grant. The initial thought was any public building on or near the water would not have trouble being rented out as there is a desire for access to waterfront space.

Mr. Brusini reviewed the six items that had been the topic of conversation, those being the marina, a public building, kayak/boat launch, boardwalk/nature trail, transfer station relocation and the potential of retail space development. When asked if there were other ideas up for discussion, Mr. Shapiro indicated there could be additional space made available to kayak/canoe/paddleboard owners (i.e. storage racks) at various locations. Mr. Donegan noted he is a frequent user of Scalloptown Park however noticing there is room for it to be enhanced; he suggested a large dock or pavilion over the water for event space.

While some Board and Commission members candidly admitted they often bring their dogs to Scalloptown Park, others were under the impression Scalloptown was not a dog park. Some questioned how is it not a dog park when there are dog waste bags available at the entrance and

“dogs must be leashed” signs posted but not be a dog park. Staff noted the current effort is an appropriate time/opportunity to clarify the use of Scalloptown Park with respect to dogs.

As for future steps the suggestion was made to reconvene in January with Mr. Brusini preparing a recommendation outline in the meantime. At that point, a memorandum shall be prepared from both the Planning Board and Cove Commission addressing the priorities to the Town Council. The recommendation was made that any project proposed be minimally self-supporting if not potentially profiting to build up for maintenance, capital improvements or phase II waterfront enhancements. A draft pro forma should be created showing income and expenses as well as a need for a marina. Mr. Cullen will contact marina construction companies for cost estimates.

Meeting adjourned at 8:38 PM

Minutes respectfully submitted by Lea Hitchen, Assistant Town Planner.

For further information, please refer to the recording available in the Planning Department.